

Clean Version of Amended Claims:

2. (Amended) The footwear of claim ~~24~~<sup>1</sup>, wherein the instep guard includes:  
a first sheet; and  
a plurality of support members extending from the first sheet to define the plurality of the hollow passages.

4. (Amended) The footwear of claim ~~24~~<sup>1</sup>, wherein at least some of the plurality of holes are defined by the first sheet and support members.

5. (Amended) The footwear of claim ~~24~~<sup>1</sup>, wherein the hollow passages are filled with air.

6. (Amended) The footwear of claim ~~24~~<sup>1</sup>, wherein the hollow passages are elongated.

7. (Amended) The footwear of claim ~~24~~<sup>1</sup>, wherein at least one of the elongated hollow passages has cross-section that is either circular, ovoid, or triangular in shape.

8. (Amended) The footwear of claim ~~24~~<sup>1</sup>, wherein the support members define a first type of elongated passage with a first cross-section shape and a second type of elongated passage with a second cross-section shape.

9. (Amended) The footwear of claim ~~24~~<sup>1</sup>, wherein the instep guard includes a resilient material.

10. (Amended) The footwear of claim ~~24~~<sup>1</sup>, wherein the instep guard is positioned on an underside of the instep portion of the footwear.